JISC InfoNet Strategy InfoKit Pilot Report: Beaumont College, Lancaster

Review of the Beaumont College Core Strategy 2010-2015

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Date: 21st May 2010

The Issue

Beaumont College is an independent specialist college (ISC). Beaumont operates in the Further Education (FE) sector and is operated by the national disability charity, Scope. The college currently has 88 learners who have a variety of learning and physical disabilities, the student population ranges greatly in complexity with learners operating (in national curriculum terms) from milestone 3-4 through to entry level 1-2 or levels 1, 2. Some learners also access courses at the local adult college or general further education college. There are 330 staff made up of a majority of social care support staff (200) and 60 teaching and learning support staff. Other staff consist of of specialist therapists (including Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists and Physiotherapists), business support staff, technology staff, and facilities staff.

Beaumont is rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted[1] (2009), a link to the full report is given in the references to this report and will give the reader further background information on the college. Beaumont also maintains a website[2] that may be of interest to the reader.

Beaumont College's current master strategic plan covers the period of September 2005 to August 2010 and we wished to make use of the strategy InfoKit to review (and update) our core strategy during the first half of 2010.

The leadership team at Beaumont College consists of the Principal, Vice Principal, Head of Development (new business and training and development), Head of Learning, Head of Operations (Finance, facilities and HR), Head of Programs (covers the transition, therapy and behaviour teams), Head of Technology and the Head of Student Support. The college also has a Health and Safety Manager / Facilities Manager who reports to the Head of Operations and the Principal. This is the core team that has been using the InfoKit to review the strategic plan. It should be noted that the Leadership Team (LT) was heavily reformed in late 2009 / early 2010 and as well as several new posts being created some LT members are new to the team and in one case new to the college.

We believe that for the process of strategy development to be effective all the managers involved in its development must have an alignment with and understanding of the process. It was apparent in our work that there were varying levels of understanding and alignment within the leadership team. Following the InfoKit structure systematically revealed these variations in a way that otherwise would not have otherwise been apparent. The newly formed Leadership Team consists of people who have varying levels of experience and understanding of strategy. A key challenge arising from this work is to minimise the variations in this response and develop the circumstances where all the LT are competent and informed strategic planners.

It is also important to note that the master strategic plan informs the development of individual annual 'QuIP' documents – these are 'Quality Improvement Plans' or 'Individual Operating Statements'. These documents are annually renewed statements of intent for each senior manager in the college that relate the strategic plan in terms of activity (or actions) and KPI's. Taken as a whole the QuIP's are a summary of all the activity the College will undertake within a year. These top level documents then feed into the work programs of individual senior managers, and in turn these feed into the work programs of individual middle managers and ultimately to front line staff. This then feeds back up the chain to the strategic plan to form a continuous feedback loop so our strategy documents are not just filed in a draw; they should actually shape and influence the direction of the college, and are informed by all managers and their staff so the strategic plan is a functional genuinely working document. Ensuring that all managers enable their teams to operate in this way is a key success factor in our use of the kit.

Beaumont College is always aiming to improve the service it offers to its student population and we see having an effective and current strategy as a key way to achieving this, especially at a time of significant change in the way education is managed and funded by government. This is particularly important in the area we operate in - that of Independent Specialist Colleges within the wider Further Education sector. The machinery of government has changed from the system of having a 'National LSC' (Learning and Skills Council) with regional offices to one where the budgets are held by local authorities – this is now administered by the YPLA (Young Persons Learning Authority). In addition to this major stakeholder change Beaumont College was due to have its entire estate rebuilt via the LSC capital development program. Unfortunately the LSC capital program ceased unexpectedly as Beaumont's application was at final stage approval. This has left the college in a difficult position as the College estate is in a poor state and really must be rebuilt as soon as possible. The College has to evaluate a phased rebuilt instead of a complete renewal. The renewal of the College estate and the transition to a new funding system are major aspects of the renewed strategy and as several futures are envisioned as being possible the plan must cover at least three contingencies that will be described later in this document.

Partly as a result of the changing funding landscape but also as a result of feedback from former students and their families Beaumont College and Scope (Beaumont's parent charity) have setup a new regional development service based at Beaumont College. Part of this service is known as 'Scope Inclusion Northwest' - this is a community based support service for young disabled adults. This service is under the management of the Head of Development. The development of this service is a new area that is being addressed by an additional section within the College's new Strategic Plan. The aim of this service is to support both former students of the college and other young adults in the community by extending the support model developed at Beaumont for use within the community. Additionally the Scope Inclusion service will use the 'specialist hub' present at Beaumont to deliver specialist services such as assistive technology support, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy etc to the clients of the service. Developing a new service has a number of challenges, not least of which is addressing the training needs of this new mobile workforce whilst maintaining the training program for the existing workforce at the college. It is also acknowledged that some key staff members and groups will be under additional pressure during the implementation of the diversification agenda. These factors and others have been included in the review of the strategic plan by the recently reformed Leadership Team. The LT as it stands now has several members who have been in post for under a year and have not experienced a full annual

planning/quality cycle as members of the LT, this has been taken into account in our use of the InfoKit in that additional support has been provided to these newer team members to complete strategy elements and QuIP's by team members who have been in the LT for a longer period. In addition one LT member is very new to the college, joining in January 2010.

Our Approach

Each member of the College LT is responsible for a section or sections of the strategy document, in some cases more than one member of the LT have worked together on a section.

The original plan (as proposed to JISC InfoNet) was for the LT to use the InfoKit on a number of occasions throughout the first half of 2010; this was to have taken place mainly during scheduled LT meetings. We changed this original plan of embedding the use of the kit into the existing leadership team meetings and decided to use two dedicated Leadership Team away days as it was difficult to fit this process into operational meetings. The first of these days was undertaken on the 8th March 2010. All members of the Leadership team were circulated the kit in its entirety (the pdf version) and provided with links to the web version to enable the web links to be used. The entire process was facilitated by the Head of Technology, the Principal and Vice Principal. Prior to day one the entire team was asked to read the 'environmental scanning' section of the InfoKit – this was chosen as a first step as we felt that the changing environment we operate within (in terms of government policy, stakeholders changing and changes to funding systems) is currently so dynamic that the only way to address this is to improve our ability to 'scan the environment' for emergent risks in order to manage them. It was hoped that having read through the ES section that each LT member would be able to identify external factors that will impact on their area of the strategy renewal – this was a success on day one and has since stimulated much discussion in the LT.

On day one the LT worked through the 'Importance of Strategy' section of the kit together and reviewed the college's mission, vision and values. The 'Mission, Vision, Values' section was used to re-evaluate the colleges existing mission, vision and values to ensure that they were valid and still apply in the current context of the college. This was done by working through the built in exercises in this section of the kit. The principal led this section of the InfoKit exercise. The LT also undertook an environmental scanning activity to identify areas of responsibility and risk. The LT then looked again at the headings in the existing strategic plan and worked on these in pairs to identify any required changes. The principal then allocated each member of the LT an area of the plan to work on. At the end of day one all Leadership Team members were given the task of using the 'Managing strategic activity' section of the InfoKit to review specific areas of the strategic plan with their teams. We aimed to ensure as many people as possible in the departments could contribute. This has included some of the tools discussed on the 'Consultation' page – this will be explored in more detail in the feedback from individual managers at the end of this section.

We also considered how our individual Quality Improvement Plans (QuIP's) are tied to the strategic plan and how our diversification plans require us to re-evaluate the strategy. KPI's were required to be stated against each item on the individual LT members QuIP's. Each LT member was asked to complete a draft of their QuIP in time for the second away day.

The presentation slide deck used to guide day 1 is available as Appendix A to illustrate how this was approached (it is clear to see where sections have been lifted from the kit). The KPI section in 'Managing strategic activity' was highlighted and linked to the QuIP formation.

The second away day took place on 3rd May 2010. The presentation slide deck for this day is available as appendix 2. The LT reviewed each proposed section of the plan that had been developed since the first away day. We reviewed our entire plan together as a team, incorporating the feedback from staff within the teams. The 'Managing Strategic Activity' section of the InfoKit was used to support the consultation process. We pulled a new draft of the strategy document together – a version of this is available as appendix 3. The proposed QuIP's were presented by each LT member to the rest of the team – all LT members were asked to identify areas of synergy for cross referencing the QuIP's. It should be noted that some QuIP's were more developed that others at this point. This was identified as a weakness in the process and will be discussed later. This section took much longer than anticipated as it generated significant debate. The involvement of the College governors was also discussed. It was not possible to cross reference the QuIP's or use the monitoring section of the kit (to the extent planned) to map the strategic plan / QuIP formulation and review to the College Quality Cycle. The 'Monitoring' section of the InfoKit will have to tie into elements of the College's existing quality cycle such as the process of writing the College SAR (Self Assessment Report).

Following the second away day the Head of Technology and the Principal presented the work done on the strategy document and the QuIP's along with the methodology used to the College Governors. The use of the InfoKit was discussed and links to the InfoKit were circulated to the Governors via email. The Governors asked a lot of questions on the strategy development process and were keen to be involved in the process. It was agreed that each member of the LT would take their section of the strategy and their QuIP to a named governor with responsibility for their area of operation for comment and amendments.

Since the second away day the Head of Technology has interviewed the entire Leadership Team to get their impressions of the InfoKit. Notes from these discussions have been shared with the principal. This process has finished with a discussion between the principal and the Head of Technology to evaluate the success of using the kit versus the last, less structured review of the strategic plan in 2005. We also discussed the feedback and have incorporated this into the lessons learnt section of this report.

As part of the discussion process it became clear that the three main future scenarios (and the diversification agenda) facing the college had not been sufficiently explored. The three main possible scenarios are:

1. The core of the College maintains a similar or slightly larger size to now and develops new business units distributed around the region using a federated approach. This scenario assumes that funding streams for students are not adversely affected by the localised funding arrangements within the YPLA / Local Authorities or are mitigated by a reversal in the localisation of budgets in line with Conservative Policy to reinstate the FEFC (Further Education Funding Council). It also assumes that significant new business can be brought about by Social Care Policy changes and the impact of direct payments and increased service

user choice. The overall service grows in 'size' in terms of turnover and staff / service user numbers.

2. The core of the College shrinks to between two thirds or one half of its current size as 'out of authority' placements are made more difficult by the localised funding structure and the constraints placed on budgets by the need to cut the national deficit. The diversification agenda is pursued and a number of new regional units are created to provide a service into the community. The overall service stays a similar 'size' in terms of turnover and staff / service user numbers.

3. The core College service remains a similar size to now as the impact of the YPLA is either mitigated or is reversed with the reformation of the FEFC in line with Conservative Policy and the diversification effort fails to attract enough business to be viable. The overall service stays a similar 'size' in terms of turnover and staff / service user numbers. This is the 'business as usual' scenario.

It is acknowledged that there is a fourth potential scenario where the core business of the College shrinks and diversification fails, in this scenario the College would either downsize or close, as this is seen as unlikely it will not be examined in as much detail as the other scenarios.

The Environmental Scanning section of the InfoKit and the 'Scenario Planning' InfoKit or 'Risk Management' InfoKit may be used as part of this scenario projection day – at time of writing this has not taken place. It was interesting to note that the process of working on the kit really made the entire LT think about the diversification agenda in a more joined up and comprehensive way and highlighted the areas that different LT members had divergent views on. How 'risk' was perceived was very different depending on the perceived impact that diversification will have on different teams.

Individual Managers Feedback

Note that whilst this section has been structured by InfoKit Section, before getting into each section of the InfoKit managers were asked "How much did you make reference to the kit, the discussion then moved on to: "What did you like / dislike or think was missing from the following sections: Mission Vision Values, Environmental Scanning, Managing Strategic Activity and Monitoring. Managers were also asked if they wanted to add anything at the end of the interview. This exercise is merely summarised here as it has informed the 'lessons learned' section later in this document.

"How much did you make reference to the kit?"

This solicited a variety of responses ranging from "Not a great deal – only on the away days – mainly because the contents of the kit were explained in the leadership days – and how we might use it." To "I read through in depth before the away days". The guided nature of the away days meant that some sections of the kit were emphasised and this influenced the level of reference was made to the kit, also as it was made clear what products were expected and some sections were highlighted, such as 'managing strategic activity' and 'the role of KPI's – this came over clearly in the interviews. It should be noted that some members of the LT had less clarity that others on what outputs were expected by when, this will be made emphatic in future planning cycles.

"What did you like / dislike or think was missing from the following sections?"

Mission, Vision, Values

We thought it was a good idea to setup an institutional context for the work that was to be done on the core strategy and that we needed to show a clear link with the rest of the organisations activities. This included examining carefully changes to the parent organisations services strategy. There was a clear consensus that Mission, Vision and Values were clearly defined in the InfoKit. There was also consensus that the process was clear and in the correct order. Nobody identified any areas that they felt were lacking. It was interesting to note that the consultation section was mentioned on several occasions. Cascading the strategic conversation to middle managers was noted as being difficult by some LT members and the use of some of the techniques identified in this section was mentioned a number of times. Face to face team meetings were used by almost all the LT members to take the strategy sections and QuIP's to their teams for consultation, although there was some delegation to middle managers to achieve this. The choice of team meetings in order to carry out consultations fits the scale of the ollege. Not all LT members involved all members of their teams, in some cases only middle managers were consulted, in other cases managers (usually with smaller teams) met with all the staff in their line management structure.

Environmental Scanning

This section was great to see in a document of this type and this was noted by several LT members, this concepts use in 'Futures Studies' was noted in the 'resource level review. This section prompted great internal debate and following the discussions/interviews with LT members it became clear that the exercise carried out on day 1 was insufficient to meet our needs and as discussed above another afternoon has been set aside to evaluate the three main 'possible futures' for the College that have previously been described. This was noted very strongly by three of the six people interviewed. Due to the Environmental Scanning exercise carried out on day one most LT members felt better prepared to identify and respond to risks. One manager really took this section on and directed her teams to undertake a number of exercises around identification of risk and used the kit to systematise the feedback process. It was also noted that one manager did not make use of this section at all outside of the day one activity – this is a contributory factor for the arrangement of another scenario projection exercise. The outcome of this exercise will almost certainly trigger a review of some sections of the Strategy document and some QuIP's; this will lengthen the time taken to produce the new documents but is likely to increase their quality. This section of the InfoKit has also identified areas of professional development for members of the LT and this will be managed by the Principal and Vice Principal.

It is fair to say that this section generated the most discussion in the Leadership Team and has been one of the most valuable sections of the kit.

Managing Strategic Activity

It was raised as a concern by some managers prior to commencing work with the kit that strategic planning was being done by the leadership team but was somewhat divorced from the 'coal face' activity of staff. Whilst we have over a number of years been moving to a very 'live' document that is not merely reviewed annually, but frequently or continuously by the previously described feedback loop from Core Strategy to senior managers QuIP, to the managers work programs to individual team members work programs and ultimately back up the chain – it was very clear from the

feedback that this process is working better in some teams than others. This can clearly be mapped to the individual senior manager's comfort with the entire process and how well they have implemented the strategic conversation or even the 'strategic cascade' within their teams and how well they have organised their workflows accordingly. Some managers involved middle managers only in the construction of the QuIP's and strategic plan elements, others took the documents to their entire teams, as noted in the Mission Vision Values feedback this did depend on the size of the team with larger teams meaning that front line staff were not directly consulted to the same level as middle managers. However some managers delegated this activity to middle managers successfully. It was noted by some managers that it is difficult to implement KPI's in some areas of college activity as they are qualitative or subjective and not given to quantitative analysis.

It was noted that the way this section is structured and broken down was very useful. The 'Role of KPI's, 'What are we actually trying to achieve?' 'Consultation' and 'prioritising activities' sections were noted as being particularly good, and the hyperlinks were useful.

Monitoring

This section has not been worked though fully yet due to the program overrunning on the second away day. We seek to build a system of continuous review that is built into the operational framework used by managers so that actions flow right from the College wide Strategic Plan via individual senior managers annual quality improvement plans, individual managers work programs and 'down' to the work programs of individual members of staff and their work programs or 'smart' targets. We want to assure that feedback flows back 'up' this chain, ultimately to inform the future development of the college wide strategic plan. This approach aligns very much with this section of the InfoKit. The questioning in 'The importance of measuring impact' was very useful indeed.

"Anything to add"

There was a general consensus that the LT now know more about the areas of synergy between departments and where QuIP's must be cross referenced in order for real changes and positive impacts to be brought about. Areas were there was disagreement or even conflict between LT members were highlighted clearly by the process. Having the kit as a reference point for everyone kept the task focussed, indeed the excellent structure of the kit was mentioned several times as being very useful. It was also noted by new LT members that the kit really helped them as they 'found their strategic feet' and provided a good way to benchmark their activity. It was agreed by many members of the LT that the team overall is still at the 'storming' stage of Tuckman's[4] (1965) team development model ('forming', 'storming', 'norming' and 'performing').

Success Factors

The strategic plan needed to be updated in any case due to its expiry in August 2010, so using the Strategy InfoKit provided an opportunity for the newly reformed LT to come together and use the kit as a focus for this project. The LT was reorganised in late 2009 / early 2010 to cover all the areas of College business function and now contains the 9 members as listed in 'The Issue' section.

A key success factor was for the Strategic Plan to be reviewed in its entirety; this has been achieved at time of writing at least in draft form. This process has been guided by the kit and feedback about the kit from LT members during the interview process has been overwhelmingly positive.

One of things we were doing was mapping the InfoKit process with our existing structure and processes. As we were coming to the end of the existing 5 year plan and as we were looking at the overall approach to strategy it was clear that our approach was very much intersecting with the InfoKit's approach – there were so many points of correspondence with the way we had gone about formulating the original strategy. For example in 2005 a key driver was to set out the actions needed to tackle the inadequate 'Leadership and Management' and 'Capacity to Improve' judgements in the 2005 Ofsted report. A key failure identified by the Ofsted team in 2005 was the lack of a coherent costed strategy and the slow rate of progress demonstrated by both Scope and the College. Reflecting on the InfoKit one of the things that struck our Principal was how the need to act quickly had created deficits in processes like environmental scanning and consultation. The fundamentals of driving activity through strategy have been implemented and understood in varying degrees in different parts of the college organisation – and again using the InfoKit brought this to light in a clear way. One of the things that our Principal was keen to use the exercise (of working through the InfoKit) for was to develop mutual understandings within the new LT about the challenges facing the college. It is not a weakness in the InfoKit that the current environment is particularly turbulent and difficult to read. Some of the team with less experience of managing ambiguity than others found applying the tools (particularly in Environmental Scanning) a disturbing process. This does not detract from the power of the tools but demonstrates how much work needs to happen if the team are to operate at optimum effectiveness.

All LT members were to have their QuIP's completed and cross referenced. Whilst some members of the LT did not prepare their QuIP's in line with the timescales originally planned (and this has impacted the development of this document) the cross referencing process has certainly brought the LT together and early indications are that this has been a very valuable process.

The Managing Strategic Activity section is likely to be useful in the long term as the strategic conversation is used to ensure that strategy informs daily operational activity. The KPI section is very clear and will be extracted and used as guidance for any manager working on the performance indicators listed on the QuIP's.

The use of the InfoKit will also be a success if the next planning cycle is smoother than this one has been as managers are developed within their roles and the understanding of strategy informing daily activity becomes truly embedded.

Another success factor that will be judged is how well the Environmental Scanning section of the kit has allowed managers to develop their ability to use the tools provided to examine possible futures, examine risks and use strategic foresight to map a preferred way forward. This will be extended by how well monitoring will be implemented by the LT in order to monitor activity direction and outcomes.

Lessons Learnt

Engagement of governing body

Engaging the governing body in the process of strategy development has proven useful; the impact of this will only be seen longitudinally in the next phase of the planning cycle. It is our recommendation to involve governance as early in the process as possible.

Allocate enough time to use the sections of the kit

On a number of occasions we allocated insufficient time to work through the exercises suggested in the kit – allow more time than you think you need feels like a good recommendation. This may be in some cases down to the uncertain future faced at this time within our sector. Allowing sufficient time for sharing progress within the core team is also important.

Environmental Scanning needs to be focussed

Our mistake in approaching Environmental Scanning was to start 'too wide' this is being corrected with three 'possible futures' being outlined so that these can be used as a basis for the scenario projection exercise and the resulting Environmental Scanning that will inform risk identification, management of these risks and future planning using informed foresight.

This was probably the most challenging part of the process for the team not because the process was unclear of badly structured simply because of the extraordinary uncertainly in the current circumstances of the college. A very powerful outcome of the work undertaken on ES by the team was the decision taken to pursue scenario planning as an outcome which will at least allow us to attempt some sort of rational codification of the multiple variables in play. We are convinced that we would not have come to that helpful conclusion if it had not been for us working through the InfoKit in a structured manner. We also think the attempt to assess risk following an exploration of the underlying values in the organisation is helpful. We think that assessing risk as a first step would be damagingly limiting on the future options available. Spending an adequate amount of time on emphasising what the college does well and what values the college holds in theory and in practice meant that the team were able to estimate risk in a framework of appreciative enquiry. We think some of the team struggled to translate the data generated by ES into meaningful action. But given the potential for wholesale change in the FE sector this is not surprising.

Some choices for 'Mission, Vision and Values' may be out of the hands of the people using the kit

We had to take account of the mission, vision and values of our parent organisation. It may be the case that these areas are outside of the remit of the people using the kit – this needs to be made clear when using the kit by whoever is coordinating the use of the kit so that time is not wasted

trying to change what cannot be changed – however mapping 'what this means for us' was a useful exercise. The question we asked was: "Given the values of our parent organisation what is the unique contribution that Beaumont College can bring?". We thought the section on mission, vision and values helped clarify a number of issues for the team and in completing the exercises focussed people's attention on 'future talk' which was energising and helpful. It brought to light shared assumptions which were interesting to articulate given the different range of experiences of different team members. The exercises also brought to light the complexity of aligning the Colleges strategy with that of the parent organisation. Going through the process helped to reinforce once again the importance of clarity in this key area, particularly with regard to governance. A particular point of interest to the Principal was feeding back to governors on the use of the InfoKit and how sophisticated the process was and how it had already begun to develop confidence and competence in the leadership team in handling concepts like mission and vision.

Ensure the cascade of elements of the kit down from senior managers to teams by appropriate use of monitoring

Ensuring that Leadership Team members properly cascade the strategic conversation down to members of their teams is an important part of monitoring the process of strategy informing operation, it is an area that we are still working on. We feel the monitoring should not be seen as an extra or imposed step but integral to the process. If it feels imposed it will be resisted and the whole endeavour will fail. If it is integral to the new mode of operation it will be a success, we aim to achieve this in the medium to long term.

We feel that the most important part of the InfoKit is the section on monitoring because it resolved the potential difficulty that an excessive investment in planning can be ultimately defeating in that such an emphasis can create monolithic structures and prevent organisations from responding flexibility. For us the insight of the InfoKit monitoring section is that it highlighted the necessity to monitor *direction and means* as well as *progress against targets*. If this practice was widely performed across the organisation at all levels then it would counter rigidity and inflexibility in delivery. It is the feedback loops between strategy and operation and the external environment that bring an organisation to life. For the team monitoring was the area of least prominence in their feedback because it has not figured in discussion in the away days, this is a clear area for development.

Ensure that the process of strategy linking to daily operational activity is well defined and understood

The review of the use of the kit really highlighted this area. The 'Managing Strategic Activity' part of the InfoKit was for us powerfully validated in that the approach we adopted to operational development in 2005 is closely mirrored by the content of the section. This accounts for the positive response to this section by the team. The alignment of strategic activity with strategic objectives is very well embedded in some areas of the college but working through the kit has revealed variations in implementation across the colleges departments. This is useful data. It will guide management

development for individuals in the team, but also organisational development for the college. The key issue of prioritisation in a rapidly changing operating environment unsurprisingly dominated discussion. Particularly where there are areas of overlap in activity between different members of the team.

Make emphatic what is expected of the team (as outputs) when using the kit

It was clear that some managers did not realise or understand what outputs were required by when, or operational work got in the way of the strategy formation. Ensuring that all LT members understand the strategic endeavour is important, we plan to make time for this and ensure individual LT members CPD is shaped in part by this.

Some elements of the kit have been more useful than others depending on the strategy development experience of the team members

It has come out of the 'strategic conversation' that the structured nature of the InfoKit has been especially useful to newer LT members and to managers with little experience of strategy development.

When used in its entirety for reviewing the core strategy of the college the kit becomes more than the sum of its parts and has helped significantly with team development

The resulting strategy document we have created is more widely understood than it's predecessor. There is a higher degree of ownership and it will be more resonant within the parent organisation. It will be based on a broader understanding of risk than before and it will effectively guide future action. It will coordinate activity across the college in a more comprehensive way than if we had not followed the InfoKit. The investment in two away days of focussed; concentrated activity has process benefits beyond the task, although it has revealed that there is still much work to be done to generate a truly effective leadership team.

Recommendations to JISC InfoNet:

Note: Some elements of this section have been adapted from the 'resource level review'.

General Notes on the website:

The presentation and layout of the website are generally good. The only thing that did not flow well was the left hand side navigation, when clicking one of the four main areas of the InfoKit it disappears from the 'lower left' sequence under 'strategy' we feel it's fine that the individual areas open up as you click on them, but we would suggest that each area opens up and stays in the same order in the navigation - we found it slightly confusing that the section you were currently looking at

moved out of the sequence under 'strategy'. 'The breadcrumbs' style navigation at the top of the screen is good.

The flow of the four main sections is thoughtful and logical, the structure does not need to be changed and the order feels right.

We particularly liked the links in the light grey boxes on the right hand side of the pages throughout. We would be happy to see even more of this, similar to notes / references pages in an academic text.

The links to other JISC resources such as the other InfoKits is excellent. This kind of cross-referencing is really valuable and shows that this InfoKit really fits into an ecosystem of other JISC materials – we feel very good use of hyperlinks was made throughout the kit.

Note on Structure

Due to the wide ranging and comprehensive content of the kit there is scope for the inclusion of executive summaries of each of the key sections of the kit. This might be helpful in circumstances where Leadership Teams have less time available or where activity takes place on several days with some gaps between them.

Conclusions

We have found the InfoKit to be very well structured and to be an excellent resource and tool set. That we have minimal recommendations to JISC InfoNet for the improvement of the InfoKit should be taken as an indication of its overall quality. We hope that our 'Lessons Learned' section and the feedback from managers in the 'Our Approach' section may be of use when others use the kit. We have certainly gained a great deal from the use of the InfoKit. The use of the kit has been a success as it has helped us renew our core strategy, but has more importantly allowed us to develop our Leadership Team. We hope to make use of the tools in the InfoKit in a longitudinal way to improve our planning cycle. We hope to also further embed the concept of strategy informing daily activity into all areas of work in order to bring about the improvements in quality we seek to achieve. Ultimately we aim for this work to improve the overall experience that Learners and Service Users have at Beaumont College and our federated services.

Outputs

See Appendix one for the presentation slides used on Day 1.

See Appendix two for the presentation slides used on Day 2.

See Appendix three for the draft 2010-2015 Strategic Plan.

See Appendix four for a sample of Quality Improvement Plans (QuIP's).

References

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